



## **National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology (NACEPT) Meeting**

**April 4, 2013**

**Ariel Rios North, Room 3530  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20460**

### **MEETING SUMMARY**

#### **Welcome, Introductions and Overview of the Agenda**

*Mark Joyce, Associate Director of the Office of Federal Advisory Committee Management and Outreach (OFACMO) and Acting Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology (NACEPT), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); William Ross, Jr., NACEPT Chair, Visiting Professor of Environmental Sciences and Policy and Duke Cancer Institute, Duke University; and Cynthia Jones-Jackson, Acting Director, OFACMO, EPA*

Mr. William Ross, Jr. (NACEPT Chair; Duke University) welcomed the NACEPT members participating in person and by teleconference/videoconference and called the roll. He expressed his appreciation to the NACEPT members for their great efforts in preparing the second advice letter. Mr. Ross thanked the EPA leadership and staff for their support as the NACEPT advises on sustainability topics. He recognized the NACEPT workgroup chairs and commended them for their hard work: Ms. Sara Kendall (Weyerhaeuser Company) and Dr. Ronald Meissen (Baxter International, Inc.) who chaired the Strengths Workgroup, and Ms. Bridgett Luther (Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute) and Dr. Olufemi Osidele (Southwest Research Institute) who chaired the Breakthrough Objectives Workgroup. Mr. Ross commented that the members who had drafted the letter, especially Ms. Kendall, had created a substantive advice letter that efficiently integrates the workgroup recommendations.

Mr. Ross explained that during the meeting, the NACEPT members will consider the substantive content of the draft advice letter and vote on approving the letter to move the process forward. Minor edits or issues will be addressed by a smaller group, including Ms. Kendall, Mr. Ross, and Mr. Howard Learner (NACEPT Vice-Chair; Environmental Law and Policy Center) following the meeting.

Mr. Ross then provided an overview of the agenda. Mr. Bob Perciasepe, Acting Administrator, Office of the Administrator (OA), EPA, will share his thoughts about EPA's sustainability initiatives. Ms. Kendall will provide a description of the second advice letter and NACEPT recommendations as well as present a few key points for discussion. Ms. Bicky Corman, Deputy General Counsel, Office of General Counsel (OGC), will discuss current EPA sustainability efforts, and several EPA staff, including Mr. Edward Fendley, Program Manager, Office of Sustainable Communities (OSC); Ms. Lisa Garcia, Senior Advisor to the Administrator for Environmental Justice; Dr. A. Stanley Meiburg, Deputy Regional Administrator, Region 4; and Dr. Michael Slimak, Director, Sustainable and Healthy Communities Research Program (SHCRP), Office of Research and Development (ORD), will speak about the social pillar of sustainability. A public comment period will be provided prior to adjournment. Ms. Cynthia Jones-Jackson (Acting Director, OFACMO, EPA) explained that Adobe® Connect, a videoconference terminal, and a teleconference line are being used to connect participants to the meeting.

In referencing Mr. William Blake's poem *The Tiger*, Mr. Ross encouraged the NACEPT members to seize the fire of sustainability to help move the Agency and Nation forward in that crucial direction. Mr. Ross then welcomed Mr. Perciasepe, stating that the Council was honored and delighted that he was present to share his thoughts about sustainability and the NACEPT's advice letter.

### **Opening Remarks**

*Bob Perciasepe, Acting Administrator, Office of the Administrator (OA), EPA*

Mr. Perciasepe welcomed the NACEPT members and thanked them for all of their efforts to advise EPA. He remarked that his comments will be brief to allow adequate time for discussion. Mr. Perciasepe explained that he is evaluating EPA's budget details in preparation for upcoming hearings. Congress passed a continuing resolution (CR) that will fund EPA through the end of the year. Sequestration requires a \$425 million (M) reduction in EPA's budget, and the Senate included an additional \$106 M reduction for EPA. Mr. Perciasepe is evaluating numerous options within EPA's operating plan to decrease the number of furlough days for EPA employees, and he expressed hope that the furlough would be reduced to fewer than 13 days.

Mr. Perciasepe explained that the concept of sustainability is a promising way to address the budget limitations. Identifying areas for improvement can result in achievements beyond the usual and sometimes expensive processes. Mr. Perciasepe expressed aspiration and confidence that developing incentive-based programs or incorporating sustainability concepts into regulatory programs will help EPA achieve the goals mandated by Congress and expected by the American public. He asserted that it was a productive place to begin the discussion.

Another area to evaluate for efficiency includes partnerships with state agencies, who themselves are experiencing broadly reduced budgets. Sustainability is a good place to talk about the role of each partner and how work can be accomplished more efficiently. Other technological tools can improve EPA's overall efficiency. Mr. Perciasepe pointed out that Congress is asking the Agency to accomplish a great deal while limiting the funding for its services. He reminded participants that "necessity is the mother of invention." EPA has a history of innovation and must continue to pursue opportunities for efficiency.

Mr. Perciasepe thanked the NACEPT for all of its efforts to advise EPA; the guidance to date has been very helpful. He explained that the Agency continues to address the value proposition for embracing the sustainability concept. For example, the case statement would explain why EPA should be involved with sustainability and how building sustainability concepts into EPA's efforts facilitates great work through improved efficiency. Another key is to build a foundation for sustainability to facilitate and streamline future efforts. Mr. Perciasepe acknowledged that EPA was in a leadership transition. Ms. Lisa Jackson, the former EPA Administrator, supported sustainability efforts and communicated their importance with EPA staff. The recently nominated Administrator, Ms. Gina McCarthy, also is a supporter of sustainability concepts. Following confirmation, EPA leaders will convene to ensure that the continuity of sustainability is articulated clearly to staff by Agency leadership. Mr. Perciasepe remarked on the need for the NACEPT's continuing observations and encouragement.

Mr. Perciasepe noted that stakeholders (e.g., industry, communities, tribes, states) benefit from discussions to share ideas and transform them into action. Sustainability provides a safe and intellectual foundation that might bring more comfort to stakeholders than regulation or oversight. The power of sustainability is to bring people together and expand partnerships.

### *Discussion*

Mr. Robert Kerr (Pure Strategies, Inc.) stated that encouraging relationships between entities is a useful way to exploit opportunities. Design for the Environment is an example of leveraging partnerships to accomplish important goals.

Mr. Ross explained that Ms. Kendall had led the drafting of the NACEPT's second advice letter, and the group would appreciate Mr. Perciasepe's comments and observations as she presents the draft letter.

### **Overview and Discussion/Approval of NACEPT's Second Advice Letter on Sustainability and the U.S. EPA**

*William Ross, Jr., NACEPT Chair, Visiting Professor of Environmental Sciences and Policy and Duke Cancer Institute, Duke University;*

*Sara Kendall, Vice President, Corporate Affairs, Sustainability and EHS, Weyerhaeuser Company; and NACEPT Members*

Ms. Kendall presented the draft advice letter to participants using Adobe® Connect and teleconference line. She reminded in-person participants to use their microphones so that attendees participating via teleconference could hear the comments. Ms. Kendall explained that she would present a high-level framework of the advice letter and mention several points for discussion. She assumed that all participants had already received the letter, so only salient details will be presented and discussed.

Ms. Kendall summarized the charges to the NACEPT and the work approach that was employed. The NACEPT began with two detailed charges and formed two workgroups that considered different aspects of the charge questions. The first charge was to describe the challenges, barriers, opportunities, stakeholder engagement needs and recommendations to help EPA implement a sustainability strategy, while the second charge was to recommend a vision, mission, measurement system, ways to share progress, tools and 3- to 5-year breakthrough objectives to propel EPA's sustainability implementation. The two workgroups developed separate work products containing some content that was discussed at the prior NACEPT meeting in August 2012, and some that had not yet been discussed by the full Council. Ms. Kendall explained that as she received feedback from the NACEPT members and EPA, the work products evolved into one succinct advice letter with merged content. The content of both workgroups is represented within the letter, and the logic flow is maintained. She encouraged NACEPT members to indicate if the essence of any discussion point had been missed in the draft letter.

The NACEPT's recommendations in providing an implementation roadmap for sustainability address three areas: aligning EPA on its path to sustainability, engaging stakeholders and demonstrating sustainability leadership. Most of the recommendations address EPA's internal alignment. Many stakeholders are on their own sustainability journeys and opportunities to leverage expertise would be beneficial. The NACEPT recognizes that EPA already has demonstrated visible sustainability leadership and has achieved numerous accomplishments, as presented by Mr. Craig Hooks (Assistant Administrator, Office of Administration and Resources Management, EPA). It is clear that EPA has a solid foundation of sustainability leadership and the recommendations are intended to further that progression.

The first five recommendations address internal EPA alignment on its path to sustainability. EPA possesses significant strengths that can be built upon to develop and deploy a sustainability strategy. A compelling mission statement, vision statement and goals will help to move the entire organization along that path. Showing leadership creates internal alignment.

The second group of recommendations addresses stakeholder engagement, which EPA already encourages. Throughout discussions with EPA, the NACEPT members sensed that one concern facing the Agency is how to address the social pillar of sustainability. The NACEPT recommends engaging with communities already working on sustainability or those that would necessarily be involved in implementing a sustainable approach. EPA should consider identifying opportunities to share information, developing partnerships to leverage resources and collaborating to find sustainable solutions.

The third category recommends the demonstration of sustainability leadership. The NACEPT recognizes the One EPA culture and finds compatibility with the strong sustainability theme. EPA has developed technology, programs and outreach activities, and has a strong presence across the entire country. The

NACEPT members believe that EPA could demonstrate leadership for businesses, communities and within the federal government. Partnering with other agencies could advance EPA's objectives and leverage the Agency's strong foundation of addressing the environmental and human health aspects of sustainability. Ms. Kendall explained that the NACEPT recognizes EPA's statute and limitations boundaries, but acknowledges that the Agency has a lot of resources (e.g., knowledge, experience) to demonstrate sustainability leadership.

The NACEPT's second advice letter on sustainability provides details for the recommendations and several subrecommendations where appropriate. Ms. Kendall referred the meeting participants to three topics discussed in depth by the workgroups that required consideration by the full Council.

The first topic for discussion relates to the proposed vision statement. The draft advice letter currently presents two vision statements, and the NACEPT members should consider whether both options should be provided or decide on one to include. Ms. Kendall noted that both statements incorporate elements of sustainability and intergenerational needs that are not reflected in the existing EPA statement. The first option contains specific details about sustainability elements and is longer, while the second option is shorter and presented at a higher level.

The second discussion topic concerns Recommendation 3, the mission statement. The vision statement is a declaration indicating EPA's objectives and how resources could be leveraged, but the mission statement details how EPA will achieve that vision. The three mission statement options developed by the NACEPT cover all aspects of sustainability; differences exist in how the economic pillar is described. The reference to quality of life in the first option infers economic vitality. The second option employs the terms "well-being" and "benefit," which are less specific, and the third option specifies the importance of long-term economic viability. The NACEPT can elect to include all three options in the advice letter, choose one option or create a different formulation altogether.

The third discussion point involves breakthrough objectives posited by the NACEPT. Ms. Kendall commented that the Breakthrough Objectives Workgroup successfully identified criteria to help EPA determine which breakthrough objectives to select for implementation. Mr. Learner had suggested adding an explicit statement to indicate that breakthrough objectives must remain consistent with EPA's statutory limitations, which will be included in the final draft of the advice letter. Ms. Kendall mentioned that the workgroup originally had included more explicit details in the breakthrough objectives, which she had softened because several members were concerned with EPA's regulatory obligations and the budget constraints facing the Agency. She encouraged careful consideration of what the Agency could achieve given its limitations.

Ms. Kendall explained that the Breakthrough Objectives Workgroup had created a spreadsheet containing 25 objectives that was reviewed by the NACEPT; nine objectives were selected for inclusion in the letter. The NACEPT can elect to include all nine breakthrough objectives in the advice letter, providing EPA with the opportunity to select the best options for the Agency, or the members can select three to include in the letter.

Ms. Kendall presented a graphic, developed by Mr. Yalmaz Siddiqui (Office Depot), depicting EPA's internal alignment. The graphic can be used to align the 2020 breakthrough objectives and their goals, indicators and metrics across EPA's program offices and regions.

Ms. Kendall asserted that in addition to deciding and finalizing the recommendations during the meeting, the NACEPT members would like to receive feedback from EPA on the revised draft. The Council had engaged in discussions with EPA staff throughout the drafting of the advice letter, but it would be useful to receive feedback prior to submitting the letter to the Administrator.

## *Discussion*

Mr. Ross expressed appreciation for the visionary graphic and thanked Ms. Kendall for the presentation. He reminded participants to speak clearly and loudly when offering their comments.

Ms. Kendall clarified that the NACEPT recommends that EPA select one to three breakthrough objectives for implementation to allow proper focus and mobilization. Agency officials indicated a preference for the NACEPT to include all nine breakthrough objectives in its recommendations to allow EPA to evaluate program priorities and progress with the options that work well within EPA's framework (e.g., greenhouse gas reduction).

Mr. Perciasepe thanked Ms. Kendall for the well-organized presentation and asserted that the recommendations will be very helpful moving forward. Mr. Perciasepe noted the relation between his opening comments and the NACEPT's ideas concerning EPA's internal alignment around sustainability. Under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), EPA is required to revise its strategic plan every 4 years, an effort that has commenced. A draft of the updated strategic plan will be available in June 2013, and will include places where sustainability concepts can be built into the Agency's structure. Mr. Perciasepe acknowledged the importance of incorporating sustainability into ongoing work as opposed to creating different processes. EPA will decide how sustainability can be manifested given the current goals. Cross-cutting strategies were added to the previous strategic plan at the same stature as traditional statute-driven goals that EPA is mandated to implement. The inclusion of cross-cutting goals expanded the conversation of environmentalism to include the role of all Agency staff. Current discussions regarding sustainability involve how to build the concept as an independent strategy or include it within media-specific goals.

Mr. Perciasepe noted the challenge of "stovepiping" within the Agency. Authorities granted by Congress tend to be problem-oriented and media-specific, not cross-cutting in nature. It is important that EPA be accountable to the responsibilities mandated by the U.S. Congress. A breakthrough concept was the creation of equally weighted cross-cutting issues that have been around for the past 4 years. NACEPT's advice letter is timely given the revision of the Agency's strategic plan. Mr. Perciasepe referred to the environmental justice (EJ) plan as an example of a cross-cutting strategy that was initiated in the previous strategic plan. The EJ plan identified high-level actions that were built into the strategic plan, including performance indicators. GPRA mandates the evaluation of key performance indicators. Mr. Perciasepe acknowledged that this is a good opportunity to integrate strategies, such as EJ and sustainability, into Agency management, and the Administration is working hard to achieve that goal.

Mr. Perciasepe was intrigued by the breakthrough objectives and remarked that the ideas could be incorporated into the Agency's structure. In his State of the Union Address, President Barack Obama called for a 50 percent improvement in energy productivity by 2030. A current federal program will double the fuel economy of automobiles by 2025. EPA's ENERGY STAR program will advance similar objectives. The Alliance to Save Energy is a bipartisan, multistakeholder group that proposes to reduce greenhouse gases by 33 percent and create 1.3 M new jobs. Another breakthrough strategy pursued by EPA is to reduce the pollutants affecting public health. Mr. Perciasepe noted several other instances where EPA's objectives and the NACEPT's recommendations are aligned.

Ms. Bicky Corman (Deputy General Counsel, Office of General Counsel, EPA) expressed appreciation to Ms. Kendall and the NACEPT members for their hard work in developing a great product. She commented that the softened language of the breakthrough objectives within this draft was preferable to the specific details that were included in previous drafts. Breakthrough objectives should not be too expensive or burdensome on the Agency. She also appreciated the inclusion of language indicating that EPA intends to work with stakeholders and promote others' efforts to achieve the breakthrough objectives. Ms. Kendall pointed out that EPA's achievements were reflected in the draft advice letter, and that breakthrough objectives could be achieved through incentives or traditional regulatory approaches.

Mr. Hooks commented that EPA is recognized as a leader in sustainability. He mentioned one challenge, which is to translate the sustainability efforts from the operational front into the programmatic front. This is even more challenging because budget constraints limit the Agency's capacity to take on new tasks. He thanked the NACEPT for acknowledging these strengths and limitations within the draft advice letter. Mr. Hooks cautioned, however, that some of the breakthrough objectives might be worded too strongly. In particular, indicating percentages for actions that would impact the private sector might be interpreted as being too aggressive. EPA does not have the regulatory leverage to affect industry as desired.

Mr. Perciasepe commented that EPA is analyzing the employment potential of Agency sustainability efforts.

Dr. Alan Hecht (Director of Sustainable Development, Office of Research and Development, EPA) commented that the NACEPT's recommendations match similar business objectives, such as waste reduction. These similar objectives provide opportunities to partner and leverage resources.

Ms. Kendall expressed her appreciation for the input and remarked on the positive partnership between EPA and the NACEPT throughout the development of the advice letter. She acknowledged that the NACEPT understood the limitations imposed by GPRA and had an active discussion on whether sustainability should be a separate cross-cutting strategy. The Council ultimately decided that sustainability should be embedded in all cross-cutting strategies. Breakthrough objectives can be used efficiently to align programmatic goals and objectives across EPA. Ms. Kendall suggested that the Agency select several recommendations from the NACEPT letter for inclusion in the strategic plan. Mr. Ross emphasized that NACEPT's suggestion of a certain number of breakthrough objectives provides further flexibility for EPA.

Dr. Osidele acknowledged the challenge of integrating sustainability into EPA's next strategic plan. He pointed out that the advice letter addresses where sustainability could be included within the strategic plan. Dr. Fernando Abruña (Sustainable Architecture) praised Ms. Kendall's efforts in softening the language and creating a more palatable advice letter.

Mr. Learner recognized the opportunity and challenge in integrating cross-cutting issues given the statutory responsibilities of EPA under the Clean Air Act (CAA) and Clean Water Act (CWA). The challenge is to integrate sustainability in a way that is fully consistent with responsibilities under operating governing statutes. He suggested that responsibilities be layered within the existing statutory structure. Earlier conversations indicated that the OGC could make room for sustainability efforts under individual statutes on a program-by-program basis. Mr. Kerr concurred with the importance of indicating the aspects of statutes that relate to goal setting.

Dr. Meiburg reiterated Mr. Perciasepe's point about energy efficiency and the importance of linking recommendations to that sector to the extent possible. He suggested that breakthrough objectives and metrics are useful in focusing energy and attention, even if the Agency does not meet the goals. Mr. Siddiqui commented that breakthrough objectives are obtainable, measurable goals that advance an organization in a direction beyond its current capabilities. Given the complex economic climate and statutory constraints, breakthrough objectives should be prioritized based on the ability to deliver the most outcome in the shortest amount of time.

Dr. Dewitt John (Bowdoin College) explained that the advice letter includes language indicating that EPA should work with companies to set ambitious objectives. The business community should be engaged as partners in the process of implementing breakthrough objectives. Mr. Ross noted that page 5 of the letter contains text on goals set by companies. Mr. Hooks remarked that existing EPA programs (e.g., WasteWise, EnergyWise) collaborate with industry to achieve beneficial objectives.

Mr. Perciasepe noted that the 1972 CWA and subsequent policies set extensive goals within statutory mandates. Although the CWA set the goal to eliminate the discharge of toxic pollutants, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) allows toxic pollutants to be discharged under certain circumstances. If the CWA had been implemented to the maximum extent, the goals would not have been achieved. Thus, one could argue that Congress must not be opposed to other incentive-based efforts that stretch beyond what the country can currently achieve. Mr. Perciasepe expressed no hesitation with partnering with industry and other stakeholders to develop “stretch” goals that move beyond EPA’s normal statutory authority efforts in a cooperative way. Creating space for innovation is imperative to achieve country-wide goals of no waste and water pollution. He cautioned, however, that EPA cannot force people to do things beyond its authority.

Mr. Ross expressed appreciation for the comments from Mr. Perciasepe and Mr. Hooks, who had other obligations and needed to leave the meeting. He solicited thoughts from the NACEPT members about the 10-recommendation format and asked if that met the Council’s general approval. Dr. Osidele opined that 10 is a good number and the condensation of the discussion into three groups of recommendations is appropriate. Mr. Learner agreed that the format of the advice letter works well. He approved of having several NACEPT members perform the final editing prior to delivering the advice letter to the Agency and suggested that any fundamental or substantive differences of opinion with regard to the content of the letter should be raised now by the NACEPT members. Dr. Edith A. Parker (University of Iowa) concurred with Mr. Learner and agreed that the draft is well done and the Council should proceed as suggested.

Mr. Ross solicited comments about the presentation of breakthrough objectives. A participant remarked that language should be added to indicate that the breakthrough objectives should be wholly consistent with the Agency’s statutes.

Dr. Osidele requested clarification regarding Mr. Hooks’ comment about the recommendations being too strong. Mr. Derry Allen (Office of Environmental Policy Innovation, Office of Policy, EPA) explained that Mr. Hooks’ concerns were addressed in the current advice letter draft. Ms. Marian Pechmann Cooper (Office of Administration and Resources Management, EPA) elaborated that it is important to avoid placing constraints on industry in the form of indicator percentages that EPA might not achieve, although optimistic objectives provide a framework for program offices. Mr. Ross opined that the letter suggests numerous breakthrough objectives, and EPA can select the ones that are most appropriate for the Agency.

A participant commented that the Agency is experiencing severe financial constraints, and the purpose of the NACEPT’s letter is to provide the best environmental policy and technology advice possible. EPA will decide how to act on the advice given the financial challenges.

Ms. Kendall explained that she was taking notes during the discussion and will redraft some sections of the draft advice letter based on the NACEPT members’ and EPA’s comments. She called for any opinions regarding the inclusion of multiple options for the mission and vision statements within the letter. Ms. Kendall commented that the multiple versions were included in the draft to respect all of the NACEPT members’ input and to provide options for EPA to decide what works best for the Agency. Dr. Osidele suggested including all of the mission and vision statement versions to provide EPA with choices to suit its needs. The participants reached consensus and agreed that all of the mission and vision statement versions should be included in the advice letter.

Mr. Mark Joyce (Acting DFO, NACEPT; Associate Director, OFACMO) provided a quote from Mr. Perciasepe to include for the placeholder on page 5 in the advice letter. The quote read, “The work EPA does today to protect human health and the environment is both critical and required by law. Embracing sustainability will ensure that work continues, but in new ways that enable the Agency to pursue its mission more efficiently, more cost-effectively and more successfully.”

Mr. Learner moved to adopt the advice letter substantially as edited to reflect the NACEPT's deliberations. The motion was seconded, and the motion to accept the advice letter passed unanimously. Mr. Ross expressed appreciation to Ms. Kendall on behalf of the NACEPT members for her efforts in drafting the advice letter.

### **EPA's Current Sustainability Efforts**

*Bicky Corman, Deputy General Counsel, Office of General Counsel (OGC), EPA*

Ms. Corman emphasized that EPA is in a transition period that will continue until the nominated Administrator is confirmed. The Agency is continuing to move forward, however, on several fronts. Prior to departing, former Administrator Jackson sent a memorandum to staff stating her conclusion that the Agency should be embracing fully the principles of sustainability.

Roundtable discussions were held in January 2013, to discuss the theme of sustainable manufacturing with representatives from industry, nongovernmental organizations and trade associations. The goal of hosting the discussions was to embrace sustainability more rigorously through Agency actions, and critical components include working with stakeholders to usher in a new era of collaboration and promoting the sustainability accomplishments of external organizations. Approximately 40 participants attended each roundtable discussion and expressed appreciation and interest in collaborating with EPA.

Ms. Corman indicated that propelling sustainability through collaborative efforts enhances the objectives of partner organizations as well as those of EPA. The Agency is integrating sustainability into the fundamental cross-cutting strategies as well as other aspects of the strategic plan, core infrastructure and institutional components. Driving sustainability into EPA's foundation will allow career employees and managers to provide consistency as political appointments depart the Agency.

Mr. Joel Makower (GreenBiz.com) published an interview with Administrator Jackson in January 2013, describing her vision for the social component of sustainability within the Agency, given that it is not part of EPA's mandate to protect human health and the environment. Ms. Jackson emphasized that EPA needs to be careful not to exceed its given authorities; the Agency is not responsible for increasing the social good of Americans. EPA is concerned with ensuring that the burden of environmental issues is borne equally and fairly. Many businesses have incorporated the social pillar into their visions and are evaluating EPA's efforts.

The Green Book, published in June 2012, indicated the need for a rigorous social sciences research portfolio. EPA has been considering what that means for the Agency. EPA has a solid record on EJ and has accomplished many successes in the community arena. Communities could drive the organization of sustainability approaches and application of the sustainability lens.

Ms. Corman appreciated the NACEPT's acknowledgement that the social aspect of sustainability is not expressly dictated in EPA's statutory missions; other federal agencies are charged with the social aspect. It is important to identify where EPA can add value.

Mr. Allen noted that the NACEPT meeting materials contain a document entitled, "Sustainability: The Social Pillar," which outlines several questions that could inform the next charge question for the NACEPT. The document also lists several areas of current EPA involvement related to the social pillar of sustainability. Questions to consider include EPA's suggested role and how the Agency might be more successful in incorporating elements of the social pillar into its activities.

### *Discussion*

Mr. Osidele asked Ms. Corman if the economic pillar garnered as much focus as the social pillar during meetings with the broad stakeholder community. Ms. Corman replied that lively discussions always



surround the impacts of EPA activities on the economic arena; this has been occurring for decades. She expressed confidence that sustainable environmental interventions provide opportunities to increase the economic and social good. There has been less focus on the economic good of sustainability in stakeholder meetings.

Ms. Corman disagreed that influencing the economic and social pillars was beyond EPA's capability and statutory authority. EPA has a lot of scientific expertise related to economics, including cost-benefit analyses. Economic scientists, but not social scientists, are employed throughout EPA offices. One challenge to hiring social scientists in response to recommendations is the severe financial constraint currently imposed on the Agency.

Mr. Ross asserted that protecting public health is a strong social component. Ms. Corman explained that EPA has considered strongly whether health belongs under the environmental or social pillar. The statutes require protection of human health and the environment; EPA focuses on the impact of pollution in various media on human health, which might be a broader definition of health than that used by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). EPA could consider impacts of the environment on mental health (e.g., the effects of green infrastructure on mental health and productivity). Dr. Osidele remarked that identifying the transition line between EPA's responsibility and that of other federal agencies is important.

Mr. Kerr mentioned that the University of Washington's Department of Ecology evaluated epidemiologic health needs and linked them to environmental health factors. The interdependence of these environmental and health factors explains the high prevalence of obesity, learning disorders and so forth. Mr. Allen agreed that this would be a relevant concept as the NACEPT embarks on its evaluation of the role of EPA within the social pillar. Mr. Ross remarked on the increasing interest and action at the intersection of the social and environmental aspects of sustainability. Ms. Corman agreed, noting that lead poisoning leads to intellectual degradation at an economic and health cost to society. Mr. Kerr commented that a broader application of the environmental-health interdependence would be useful.

Ms. Kendall cautioned EPA to refrain from viewing the social and economic pillars as independent elements; rather, the Agency should seek holistic solutions. Although EPA's authorizing statutes might not dictate the creation of social good or economic development, the Agency has a strong history of incorporating these elements into its programs. Ms. Kendall explained that the NACEPT specifically refrained from recommending sustainability as a separate cross-cutting issue in favor of infusing the strategy throughout all programs. She mentioned that many businesses, including her own company, are trying to achieve the same goal. Ms. Corman agreed that viewing the sustainability elements of economic, social and environment as "pillars" might be counterproductive because they are in fact holistic systems. She emphasized that capitalizing on EPA's strengths is important to accomplish the greatest impacts given the available tools.

Mr. Ross welcomed and introduced the panelists to discuss EPA's efforts related to the social pillar of sustainability. He expressed appreciation for their efforts in preparing for and attending the meeting. The presentations were sent via email to NACEPT members participating by teleconference.

### **The Social Pillar of Sustainability I**

*A. Stanley Meiburg, Deputy Regional Administrator, Region 4, EPA*

Dr. Meiburg described a regional view of EPA and social sustainability. He remarked that the term "sustainability" is applied in different ways depending on the speaker. Sustainability can be viewed through a community lens, ecosystem lens, or within an industrial and manufacturing context. These related perspectives all present different aspects, which can create uncertainty. Dr. Meiburg encouraged clarity when discussing sustainability and explained that his presentation would address the community lens as it relates to the social pillar.

Dr. Meiburg acknowledged that the social pillar has not been EPA's core historic focus. The Agency's prescribed work already is overdetermined given all of its statutory obligations. The historic skill set of EPA includes scientists, engineers and attorneys, and its historic tools involve regulation and enforcement. The social pillar matters, however, because EPA's mission is to protect human health and the environment, which requires many tools in addition to statutory ones. Core tools are essential but not sufficient, and voluntary actions are as important as required actions in achieving the Agency's mission. Dr. Meiburg asserted that the mission statement should be changed, but its broad perspective is a strength.

EPA is challenged by the social pillar because communities constantly request actions (e.g., Superfund, enforcement context) that exceed EPA's authority and/or resources. For example, a zoning requirement may be an underlying issue in addressing a community problem, but EPA does not control local zoning. Although EPA has 17,000 employees, the Agency still must partner with state and other entities when its resources are exceeded (e.g., stationing people in a particular location).

Dr. Meiburg noted that another challenge is that EPA's technical standards and regulations do not promote community trust. It is important, therefore, that EPA correct misunderstandings and communicate effectively to communities.

The final social pillar challenge involves community problems, such as environmental issues, that are outside of EPA's jurisdiction (e.g., provision of street lighting). Communities might think that EPA is being nonresponsive, when in actuality the Agency cannot address the issue as requested. Dr. Meiburg acknowledged the significant challenge for the NACEPT in evaluating EPA's role relating to the social pillar.

Importantly, EPA's partners possess additional tools that can be leveraged to achieve greater effectiveness, so the way to move ahead is to forge strong collaborative partnerships. Partnerships accomplish many objectives, including reframing issues, providing additional tools, leveraging resources, translating bureaucratic language (e.g., decoding acronym-heavy terms), educating communities and fostering a common understanding. A successful collaboration such as the Partnership for Sustainable Communities between EPA, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) leverages resources, funding and technical expertise to accomplish the program objectives. Partnerships can build on a foundation of trust (e.g., local universities or health care providers) to engage communities in EPA's efforts.

Pursuing partnerships requires that EPA operate as a convener and facilitator in addition to its historic role as a regulator. The role of facilitator is consistent with EPA's mission to protect human health and the environment. Facilitation requires augmented skill sets, including improved communication as well as social and behavioral science research to produce insights about how to produce real change in a community. As a social scientist, Dr. Meiburg asserted that increasing the numbers of social scientists at the Agency would be useful.

EPA's statutory mandates pose a challenge to incorporating the social pillar into Agency efforts because resources already are oversubscribed. Another challenge is the acceptance of a broader perspective of EPA responsibilities, which might conflict with the mandated responsibilities and what must be done to achieve the mission. The final obstacle to incorporating the social pillar is limited resources. Despite these challenges, it is important for the Agency to consider implementing the social pillar of sustainability to achieve its objectives.

### *Discussion*

Dr. Abruña stated that, in his experience as an architect, he has observed the inherent difficulty engineers have in understanding the community design process.

In response to a question from Ms. Corman, Dr. Meiburg explained that his foundation as a social scientist allows him to ask questions from a different perspective and understand the government framework. This perspective also is useful in understanding how communities organize, where the center of influence is located, and how to communicate effectively. Social science also seeks understanding for effective communication and how to ensure that communities hear and understand EPA messages. For example, in a Superfund site community, samples may be taken from many different yards, but only some require remediation; effective communication reduces confusion within the community about the process and the actions. Explaining the resource constraints and science underlying the contamination standards requires a high level of skill.

Dr. Parker asked if social scientists should be integrated within ORD. Dr. Meiburg explained that social scientists are helpful in regional offices that work directly with communities. Project managers who can assess contaminant risk and understand the dynamics of communicating to a community forum are most useful.

Dr. John commented that the NACEPT's prior advice letter, which addressed EPA's workforce, emphasized the need for EPA to hire individuals with different types of expertise, including social scientists. He remarked that scientists trained in the past 10 years have been exposed to interdisciplinary training that incorporates technical as well as social aspects. Dr. John acknowledged that EPA is in a difficult position, given the sequestration, temporary lack of a confirmed Administrator and loss of faith by some environmental groups. He asked if there were actions that could strengthen EPA's capacity at the regional level. Dr. Meiburg responded that EPA's statutes are quite constrained and have existed for 25 years without a major reevaluation. The statutes were created with the perspective of a different era; they work well in some areas but are less effective with communities. A thoughtful revisitation of the statutes might allow the Agency more flexibility to pursue the broader mission of protecting human health and the environment. Dr. John expressed concern with the complication of revisiting statutes through Congress and suggested approaching the issue using a bottom-up approach. Identifying successful regional activities might be useful.

## **The Social Pillar of Sustainability II**

*Lisa Garcia, Senior Advisor to the Administrator for Environmental Justice, EPA*

Ms. Garcia focused her remarks on EPA's EJ priority and the desire to integrate EJ into all EPA activities. The concept of sustainability embraces EJ and much synergy exists. The first principle of EJ is meaningful engagement and outreach. Meaningful engagement of stakeholders (e.g., industry, government) in processes—such as pollution management planning—allow the development of innovative ideas and holistic solutions that accomplish sustainability objectives. Ms. Garcia asserted that the NACEPT provides an understanding of all possible ways to inform decision making and advance sustainability in all EPA actions.

Another principle of EJ speaks to the fair treatment of all people, focusing on low-income minority and tribal populations, which tend to experience disproportionately high rates of conditions such as obesity. When considering the levels of fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), EPA evaluates levels across the Nation but also considers the location of PM<sub>2.5</sub> "hotspots" because pollution loading in certain populations poses a greater burden. For example, Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) Permits evaluate the level of pollutant in addition to asthma rates of the local population. A further evaluation of low-income, minority areas with a high burden of asthma rates encourages the consideration of what can be done within EPA's authority to develop alternative solutions.

Community benefits should be considered when evaluating alternative sustainability efforts. Encouraging community engagement of the public and academia will provide better alternatives than would be identified by an isolated laboratory scientist. An example of this occurs during the siting of a power plant. Different interest groups advocate for either water or air cooling of the plant. One group opposes water

cooling because of its effects on marine life, while another group of citizens opposes air cooling because it is very loud and produces disruptive steam. In this situation, alternatives need to be analyzed carefully in consideration of the effects on all stakeholders.

When considering EJ principles from the context of the social pillar, evaluating community-based priorities and including everyone “at the table” is important. Ms. Garcia noted that the advice letter effectively speaks to stakeholder engagement, as well as improving community-based outreach and coordination throughout the Agency. Especially in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, community resiliency and adaptation is an important avenue of research, in addition to topics of climate change, EJ and innovative technology.

### *Discussion*

Dr. Osidele asked about social science research priorities for EPA’s ORD. Ms. Garcia commented that given the Agency’s financial constraints, it is difficult to choose between hiring a toxicologist or social scientist, but an individual who understands the cumulative effects of pollution on overburdened areas can be helpful in addressing relevant social science issues. EPA scientists are beginning to investigate cumulative risk assessments. Historically, analysts would monitor the emissions of one smokestack in one facility, but it is important to evaluate the cumulative effect of emissions from all smokestacks in the area, as well as the traffic burden and other potential sources in that area. Social scientists can assess why obese individuals who lack health care access are more vulnerable and how that information can be incorporated into risk assessments.

Mr. Kerr remarked that other federal agencies possess social science expertise that EPA could potentially tap. He mentioned an example in which an agency collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to obtain the epidemiological expertise needed for a project. Doing so leveraged resources and was more efficient and cost effective. One idea would be to collaborate with the HHS to obtain data on health disparities and correlate the information with locations of polluting facilities. Mr. Ross added that universities, particularly their schools of public health and the environment, also could be of service to EPA by supplying social science and other expertise not available within the Agency.

Dr. Parker informed participants that the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) collaborated with EPA on a project to conduct extensive exposure assessments near roads to examine particulate matter and associated health effects. Thinking strategically and encouraging participatory research will elicit great dividends.

Ms. Corman asked for suggestions for breakthrough objectives for social science that would be the most effective. Dr. Parker replied that cumulative exposure is one such avenue for research, as well as embracing participatory approaches. A recent application of the community participatory approach in Detroit, Michigan, allowed community members to direct the location of monitors. Dr. Parker cautioned against hiring many social scientists without first exploring the expertise available through EPA partners. Dr. Osidele agreed that it would not be a good use of EPA’s financial resources, as much social science research is being performed already. In response to an earlier comment by Ms. Garcia, Dr. Osidele stated that the best EPA staff member would be an individual with broad systems thinking who can cross disciplinary borders, as the NACEPT recommended in its first advice letter.

Dr. Hecht suggested that EPA consider the driving forces behind EJ as it considers communicating and implementing sustainability concepts. Identifying lessons learned from the EJ movement will enable EPA to propel sustainability forward.

### **The Social Pillar of Sustainability III**

*Michael Slimak, Director, SHCRP, ORD, EPA*

ORD is the research arm of EPA that serves all programs and regions. Regional research programs are designed and organized to support regional decision making. Several years ago, former EPA Assistant Administrator, Dr. Paul Anastas, requested that ORD be reorganized around a sustainability paradigm. As a result, ORD created six national programs that all contain a sustainability focus. The SHC is at the forefront of adopting sustainability concepts. Dr. Slimak presented a conceptual framework for a sustainable community, which leads to the conservation of natural capital, community-level economic resilience, and better health outcomes and increased well-being. Economically resilient communities are able to overcome the effects of natural disasters, which relates to the economic pillar. Whether human health is part of the social or environmental component of sustainability has generated an intense debate. It is clear, however, that all three sustainability pillars are inextricable and interdependent.

A community that achieves sustainable environmental quality will result in positive outcomes in economic and social pillars. This hypothesis will be tested within the SHC, focusing on the environmental pillar and resulting health outcomes and improved social well-being. Although ORD is not conducting research on the economic pillar, available data can be used to support or disprove the hypothesis. The SHC will address questions such as whether forms of governance of a community or geophysical location are important variables in achieving sustainability. New Orleans, Louisiana, for example, is significantly different than Denver, Colorado, and understanding the different approaches to achieve sustainable outcomes is important.

EPA needs to conduct more social science research, yet is limited by resources and human capital. Many new scientists possess a more transdisciplinary research background. Researchers seek to understand human behavior and individual value systems. For example, they might try to understand why some participants brought a plastic bottle of water to the meeting while others brought a reusable bottle. Understanding human behavior will help address the social pillar. EPA is required to implement enumerated and limited statutes, and individual or collective behavior research is viewed as outside of the Agency's mission.

Working with the conceptual framework, a community that is sustainable will protect and improve the health and well-being of all residents, provide opportunities for public and private investments, enhance social equity, conserve its natural resources and promote open space. Communities rarely focus on all of the principles, but a systems-based approach will improve a community's ability to simultaneously address all of the objectives.

Dr. Slimak explained that the SHC has identified the sectors most important to community decision making, including land use, transportation, infrastructure, drinking water and waste management. Communities spend a lot of time thinking about these issues, but tend to consider them independently. The SHC is designed to help communities develop tools to better understand the community decision sectors from a systems perspective. Dr. Slimak commented that the SHC's detailed research plan can be found on ORD's website.

#### *Discussion*

Dr. Osidele and Ms. Corman asked what social science research efforts would be most valuable to the Agency. Understanding and categorizing human behavior enables the development of tools to address technology and decision making. Dr. Osidele referred participants to a cartoon depicting people drawing water out of a well: the person with the powerful pump does not support limits on water use, while the other individuals support such limits. Dr. Slimak suggested developing tools to identify and understand human behavior and determine what is needed to adjust the behavior. He mentioned that newly hired social scientists would be asked to evaluate the conceptual framework and identify research questions to

understand why certain individuals are more interested in sustainable issues (e.g., green technologies, roof gardens) and to identify what drives individual behavior. Other research questions might address education or EJ issues. There are many questions in the realm of the social science arena that are important to understanding and achieving sustainability.

Dr. Parker asked if university research provides a source of information that EPA could leverage. Dr. Slimak asserted that much research exists in academia and the literature, regarding environmental quality, public health, and ecosystem goods and services, and the SHC intends to utilize those resources to develop testable hypotheses. It is conceivable that EPA might not need to conduct much original research because of the wealth of available information. Some of that research, however, might be conducted in a way that is not relevant to the concept of sustainability that is being developed in the SHC.

#### **The Social Pillar of Sustainability IV**

*Edward Fendley, Program Manager, OSC, EPA*

Mr. Fendley presented the OSC's sustainability perspective on smart growth and the social pillar of sustainability, which inherently cuts across media of land, air and water. He explained the OSC's efforts to address the environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainability. The OSC applies tools to assist communities with their implementation of sustainable approaches rather than dictate regulations. Mr. Fendley noted that the approach has been successful, resulting in friendships and increased trust of EPA in communities.

Smart growth generates compact, mixed-use communities that are beneficial to community sustainability, and EPA Smart Growth technical assistance contributes directly to participation and social cohesion in recipient communities. Smart growth contributes to each of the social pillar elements, including awareness of sustainability, participation, equity and social cohesiveness. Social cohesiveness contains an element of community integration and is related to the notion of equity. The smart growth approach allows for people of different income levels, professions and ethnicities to live together and interact through walkable neighborhoods and choices in housing and transportation. In this respect, the smart growth built environment increases equity, community engagement and diversity.

Mr. Fendley remarked that humans lived in sustainable community settlements for 10,000 years. Only in the latter part of the 20th century have communities deviated from that strategy in the form of dispersed housing, shopping and jobs. Evidence indicates that the traditional approach is rising in favor. Compact, mixed-use communities have cleaner air and water, better human health and a smaller carbon footprint. Describing how the built environment affects environmental sustainability builds awareness, and communicating these concepts contributes to engagement with the social pillar of sustainability.

Community engagement and participation include the propensity to form associations. Traditionally, this occurred in the form of a town meeting, but the participatory model changed in the 20th century. A quote from a 1964 newspaper indicated that, "When the highway engineers have concluded that a highway should be built, then experts should be satisfied and permit the program to go ahead," indicating that the decision, which affected communities, would not be subjected to community debate. This results in severe consequences, including the separation of residential zones from shopping areas and challenges in traveling between them. Current participation models encourage community engagement in decision making, and the OSC has experienced much success with the model. For example, in Brownsville, Pennsylvania, community members, including youth, participated in a community visioning process to develop a community park. Young people are optimistic and have fresh ideas.

Smart growth and EJ have overlapping goals with regard to equity, including the importance of investing in existing communities and the provision of transportation and housing choices. Transportation choices are not equitable if people who are unable to drive (e.g., due to age or lack of a vehicle) cannot get to their

destinations. Affordable housing is very important. People feel welcome where these equitable principles are applied.

Social cohesiveness includes “infrastructure planning that supports social integration and environmental sustainability,” and is the suggested lens to analyze the social pillar. Smart growth provides public and quasi-public spaces to promote incidental interaction, which is beneficial for the social pillar of sustainability but also encourages innovation and improves the economy.

### *Discussion*

Dr. Abruña concurred with the importance of architecture, public space, transportation and infrastructure design in promoting the social component of sustainability. New urbanism and traffic-oriented development are current concepts pursuing the ideals of smart growth.

### **Public Comments**

Mr. Ross called for public comments and none were offered.

### **Next Steps**

Ms. Corman expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn about how environmental interventions yield a social impact. A corollary is how EPA can influence the social arena to accomplish particular environmental objectives. Dr. Slimak agreed with the importance of modifying human behavior to favor sustainable actions; effective communication will play a large role.

Mr. Allen opined that an exploration of the social pillar is an excellent subject for the NACEPT to address next, and the OP is willing to help the Council organize around the topic. The first step will be to develop a charge question for the NACEPT. The questions provided in the “Sustainability: The Social Pillar” document, provided in the meeting materials, comprise a starting point, and additional questions could evolve as the process continues. There is potential for the NACEPT to explore additional dimensions of sustainability beyond the social pillar. EPA might value broader advice during the transition period.

Ms. Jones-Jackson expressed appreciation to Ms. Corman and Mr. Allen for developing questions for the NACEPT to inform the next charge question addressing the social pillar. Mr. Ross concurred that the questions provide a good starting point. He suggested that several interested Council members participate in an exploratory discussion to formulate a path forward. Mr. Kerr and Drs. John, Parker and Osidele agreed to participate in the exploratory meeting. The invitation to participate in a preliminary discussion will be extended to NACEPT members who did not attend the meeting.

Ms. Kendall commented that it would be useful to consider how EPA can demonstrate resiliency in the face of budget constraints by creatively assessing opportunities to do things differently. For example, EPA can leverage social science resources at external organizations, which might be more complicated than doing the work in-house, but also might be more robust. EPA has thoughtfully addressed issues of environmental justice and risk assessment even when not specifically mandated by statutory authorities. Dr. Osidele suggested that the charge question include an investigation and inventory of resources available outside of EPA. A literature review would be a useful place to begin to identify available resources in the research community and industry. Dr. John commented that an analysis of EPA’s needs could be correlated with the external resources.

Mr. Joyce reiterated the two tasks facing the Council: complete the second advice letter on sustainability and further refine the next charge question. He suggested that Council members send any specific word changes for the advice letter to Ms. Kendall by April 12, 2013, and she will incorporate them into the final draft. Ms. Kendall also will modify the draft to reflect the Council’s deliberations during the meeting

and add the quote from Mr. Perciasepe. Ms. Kendall stated that she preferred to receive comments and revisions in the form of an edited, redlined document. The final draft will be reviewed by Mr. Ross and Mr. Learner prior to distribution.

Mr. Joyce solicited comments on how the charge questions could be further refined to provide greater direction to the NACEPT. Ms. Corman clarified that the NACEPT is being asked to provide guidance on the social pillar of sustainability. Mr. Allen stated that the Council should address the social pillar, and additional topics might be added as the deliberations proceed.

The participants discussed the format of future NACEPT meetings, which most likely will occur via teleconference/videoconference given the current budget limitations. Ms. Jones-Jackson mentioned that there might be a face-to-face meeting scheduled in August or September 2013, but it is not definite. Mr. Joyce said he expected the format of future meetings to be the same as this meeting, at least for the remainder of the fiscal year. Ms. Kendall opined that working on a targeted charge is preferable; organizing the process by teleconference will be more complicated.

In response to a question, Ms. Jones-Jackson explained that teleconferences can be scheduled monthly or at any other interval deemed necessary by the Council. Mr. Ross stated that the NACEPT will conduct one or two exploratory calls to refine the charge and then will develop an effective plan and schedule to accomplish the objectives.

Mr. Ross extended his gratitude to the EPA staff members for their assistance in planning the meeting and providing input on the substance of the advice letter. He congratulated the NACEPT members, especially Ms. Kendall, for their hard work in responding to the charge question and drafting the second advice letter on sustainability. Ms. Jones-Jackson expressed appreciation to the NACEPT members under the leadership of Mr. Ross for their efforts and invaluable advice. She also thanked the EPA personnel for their assistance and contributions.

Mr. Ross asked for any final thoughts or observations. There being none, he adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m. EDT.



### **Action Items**

- ✧ Ms. Kendall will incorporate the discussion comments and revisions, as well as the quote from Acting Administrator Perciasepe, into the draft advice letter.
- ✧ NACEPT members will send any additional suggestions for specific word changes for the draft advice letter to Ms. Kendall by April 12, 2013. These comments/revisions should be in the form of a tracked changes document.
- ✧ Ms. Kendall, Mr. Ross and Mr. Learner will review the final draft of the advice letter prior to submission to the Agency.
- ✧ NACEPT members who are interested in exploring the social pillar of sustainability will participate in an exploratory discussion to formulate a path forward to address the topic. The invitation to participate in a preliminary discussion will be extended to NACEPT members who did not attend the meeting.

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### Chair Certification

I, William Ross, Chair for the National Advisory Council for Environmental Policy and Technology (NACEPT) certify the meeting minutes for April 4, 2013 (video/teleconference) are complete and accurately reflect the discussions and decisions of said meeting.



**5/31/13**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**William Ross**  
**NACEPT Chair**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**